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NASIS

NEBRASKA ANNUAL SOCIAL INDICATORS SURVEY

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NASIS-87, #5

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL
SITE REGULATION

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Price: $ .50

The Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey

David R. Johnson and Alan Booth, 1987 Study Co-Directors

The findings in this report are based on data collected in the Twelfth Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey (NASIS). This survey is part of an on-going study of the quality of life in Nebraska conducted by the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

In the Fall of 1987, a representative sample of 1882 Nebraskans eighteen years of age or older living in households was interviewed by telephone. The respondents were selected using a random digit telephone sampling design. The interview averaged approximately 30 minutes and included questions about work, recreation, attitudes towards public services, taxes, and political and social issues. Other items included in the survey measured the quality of life in the state. For the entire sample, 95 out of 100 times the percentages computed from the items asked on the survey are likely to be accurate to within plus or minus 2.3 percent of the figure that would have been obtained if each adult in Nebraska had been surveyed. This is an estimate of maximum error and for most items the percentages are likely to be even more accurate.

The data gathered by NASIS are used by a wide variety of state and local government agencies for policy and program planning and by faculty and students at the University of Nebraska and other colleges for research and training. No information identifying any respondent is released to any users and the strict confidentiality of individual respondents is rigidly enforced. While the final responsibility for the organisation and structure of the survey and for reports produced rests with the Bureau of Sociological Research, public agencies and university departments play an integral part in planning the survey through an Advisory Committee. Public organisations interested in membership on the Advisory Committee should contact the NASIS Study Directors.

Funding for NASIS comes from the University of Nebraska, the Bureau of Sociological Research, and state and local agencies which buy items and data analysis from the survey.

The NASIS surveys are repeated each year to measure change in the quality of life in Nebraska. While there is a core of questions which is included every year, each survey has a large component of unique items which address specific topical areas. Additional details on the NASIS surveys or questions regarding the use of the survey data or cost of purchasing items on future surveys can be obtained by contacting Alan Booth or David R. Johnson, NASIS Study Directors, at the Bureau of Sociological Research or by sending for a copy of the 1988 NASIS Prospectus.

NEBRASKANS OVERWHELMINGLY FAVOR SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL SITE REGULATION

With newspaper reports of landfills contaminating underground water supplies in Nebraska, there is concern about their operation. Last year the Legislature authorized the Department of Environmental Control to survey the solid waste disposal sites in the state. While the larger landfills are regulated, there are approximately 360 unlicensed and uninspected landfills in the state. They are not regulated because of 1972 legislation that exempts smaller communities (5,000 population or less) from the regulations. Given the concern that people have that landfills might endanger water supplies and public health, questions on this topic were included in the most recent Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey.

In October and November of 1987, a representative sample of 469 people were asked: "Every community uses some kind of dump or landfill to get rid of waste. Some of these dumps are polluting the underground water supply. Would you favor or oppose state wide license and inspection to prevent water contamination.?" As the data in Table 1 show, most (94%) favor regulation, and 4% are opposed. Only 2% are undecided about the matter.

Table 1. Percent Who Favor or Oppose Landfill License and Inspection

	Percent	Number in Category
Favor	94	441
Oppose	4	21
Uncertain	2	7
Total	100	469

We checked to see if responses differed by the size of the community in which the individual resided, whether or not they voted within the last two years, and the amount of formal schooling they had obtained. There were no differences.

Because operating and constructing landfills so they do not pollute the water supply must be financed, the question was asked: "To keep landfills from polluting the ground water, some communities are raising taxes while other are charging a users fee. Do you favor raising the taxes or charging a fee for each use to pay for safe dumps?" It is clear people do not want to raise taxes, but prefer instead to rely on user fees to pay for safe landfills. Ninety two percent preferred user fees and only 8 percent thought taxes should cover the costs of safe landfills.

Whether more people would chose the tax option if they knew of the problems associated with user fees (such as making use of unregulated landfills) is unknown. More research is needed to further understand preferences for funding landfill operation.

List of reports already released using data gathered in the 1987 Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey. These may be purchased at the indicated price from the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Report Number	Title
1	1987 NASIS Methodology Report: Study Design, Instruments, and Forms. David R. Johnson. Price: $7.50.
2	Majority Favor Higher Salaries For Legislators. Alan Booth. Price: $ .50.
3	Majority Favor Alternatives to Death Penalty. Alan Booth. Price: $1.00.
4	Support Concept of Living Wills. Alan Booth. Price: $ .50.